

Appendix L: Plan Implementation

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1. Introduction

This appendix summarizes the actions and needs necessary to implement Alternative D, the preferred alternative, as presented in the Draft CCP and EIS. Modification will be made as needed based on the Regional Director's alternative selection decision. This appendix will be incorporated as a separate chapter in the Final CCP.

2. Actions – Existing Funding and Staffing

The following actions are derived from objectives and strategies in the CCP and represent those actions that can be accomplished with existing resources. Some of these actions are ongoing, but most will require a new initiative and/or redirection of existing base funding and personnel. This list will help focus annual work planning and performance plan preparation during the 15-year life of the plan. Details of these actions are found in Chapter 2 of the Draft CCP and EIS.

Goal 1: Landscape

1. Prepare and print a new Land Use Allocation Plan in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers.
2. Continue modest land acquisition program.
3. Explore land exchanges with the states.
4. Continue work with the Department of the Army for land transfers at the Lost Mound Unit (Savanna Army Depot).
5. Complete a management plan for each Research Natural Area
6. Seek cooperative research/monitoring opportunities in Research Natural Areas.
7. Conduct yearly boundary reviews of Research Natural Areas.
8. Facilitate nomination package for Wetland of International Importance.

Goal 2: Environmental Health

1. Increase assistance agreements with watershed partners.
2. Continue interagency efforts on watershed partnerships and pool drawdowns.
3. Increase emphasis on water quality through habitat projects, support of state and federal initiatives, public information efforts, and interpretive and environmental education programs.
4. Increase cooperation and public education to address invasive species.

Goal 3: Wildlife and Habitat

1. Implement Pool Plans to extent possible working with Corps of Engineers and states using funding sources such as the Environmental Management Program.
2. Adopt and use guiding principles for habitat projects.

3. Amend the Wildlife Inventory Plan.
4. Establish a Refuge Research Team and conduct formal coordination meetings with U.S. Geological Survey.
5. Complete a Habitat Management Plan.
6. Complete a management plan for each federally-listed threatened and endangered species on the Refuge.
7. Complete a Fishery and Mussel Management Plan.
8. Update the Refuge Trapping Plan.
9. Conduct public information and education effort about turtles on the Refuge.
10. Continue to use fire for habitat management – implement the Refuge's Fire Management Plan.
11. Conduct more active grassland management; include in Habitat Management Plan.

Goal 4: Wildlife-Dependent Public Use

1. Update the Refuge Hunting Plan
2. Establish new administrative No Hunting Zones to avoid user conflicts or address safety issues.
3. Modify the Waterfowl Hunting Closed Area System and regulations; post all areas each year.
4. Monitor waterfowl use and human disturbance in the Waterfowl Hunting Closed Area System.
5. Implement waterfowl hunting regulation changes (e.g. shotshell limit, spacing limit).
6. Implement managed hunt at Gibbs Lake, Lake Onalaska, Pool 7.
7. Phase out use of permanent waterfowl hunting blinds in Savanna District.
8. Modify the Potter's Marsh managed hunt, Savanna District.
9. Eliminate the Blanding Landing managed hunt, Savanna District (Lost Mound).
10. Conduct public information campaign (media, leaflets, meetings) and increase law enforcement presence for all hunting-and-fishing-related changes.
11. In cooperation with states, issue Refuge permits for fishing tournaments.
12. Write standards for commercial fish float facilities and operations.
13. Implement consistent process for regulating commercial guiding operations.

Goal 5: Other Recreational Use

1. Implement new policies and regulations related to camping and beach-related uses.
2. Implement new beach maintenance policy and complete beach plans in cooperation with Corps of Engineers and the states.
3. Explore user fee system to off-set maintenance and administrative costs of other recreational uses.
4. Establish and post additional Electric Motor Areas.
5. Establish new slow, no wake zones.
6. Implement new regulation dealing with dog and other domestic animal use.
7. Annually review and update as needed public use regulations.
8. Conduct public information campaign (media, leaflets, meetings) and increase law enforcement presence for all general recreational use changes.

Goal 6: Administration and Operations

1. Implement a self-service boat launch fee at Refuge-operated boat ramps.
2. Review and update annually funding need databases for operations and maintenance.

3. Actions – New Funding and Staff

The following actions are derived from objectives and strategies in the CCP and represent those actions that can be accomplished if new funding and/or staffing is allocated to the Refuge. Details of these actions are found in Chapter 2 of the Draft CCP and EIS. Costs are estimates and will likely be higher or lower based on detailed project planning and timing of implementation. Staff costs reflect 2005 salary and benefit rates at grades normal for the positions described. These needs will be reflected in key Refuge System databases such as the Refuge Operating Needs System and the Maintenance Management System which provide information used in budget formulation and allocation. The Refuge will also seek other project funding such as cost share agreements with partners, grants from non-profit groups, and cost-saving or reprogramming measures within existing budget allocations. Implementing Environmental Pool Plans (Goal 3, Action 1) could be partially accomplished through the Corps of Engineers administered Environmental Management Program and the Navigation and Environmental Sustainability Program (NESP) if authorized and funded by Congress.

Goal 1: Landscape

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Re-survey and post Refuge boundary in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers		\$ 50K
2. Acquire an average of 1,000 acres per year within approved Refuge boundary (Land and Water Conservation Fund funding)		\$1,500K

Goal 2: Environmental Health

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Hire private lands biologist or technician for each of the Refuge's four districts to work in watersheds		\$ 280K
2. Establish Access Trust Fund for recreational access work to facilitate pool drawdowns	\$3,000K	
3. Hire temporary, seasonal technicians to complete invasive plant inventory.	\$ 250K	
4. Write invasive plant control and management plan	\$ 20K	
5. Hire fishery biologist to coordinate invasive animal control and management, and other fishery and mussel related work		\$ 100K

Goal 3: Wildlife and Habitat

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Implement at least 30 percent of Refuge-priority Environmental Pool Plan actions	\$ 150,000K	
2. Hire a biologist for Districts without (2) to coordinate wildlife and habitat monitoring and management		\$ 200K
3. Hire a GIS biologist at Refuge Headquarters to support all Districts		\$ 80K
4. Monitor all federally-listed threatened and endangered species		\$ 20K
5. Issue permits for commercial fishing/clamming (hire permanent, part-time receptionist/permit specialist at each District to handle this and other permit functions in CCP)		\$ 120K
6. Develop cooperative agreements with states for sharing commercial fishing permittee and catch information (fishery biologist responsibility, costs already captured)		NA
7. Initiate 3-5 year turtle ecology study; complete turtle management plan	\$ 100K	
8. Complete, with Corps of Engineers, Forest Inventory of the Refuge	\$ 75K	
9. Hire Refuge Forester; complete Forest Management Plan		\$ 100K

Goal 4: Wildlife-Dependent Public Use

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Construct 3 new fishing piers or docks	\$ 100K	
2. Construct a variety of observation decks and trails to foster wildlife observation and photography	\$ 500K	
3. Hire visitor services specialists at McGregor and Winona Districts to increase programs and services, and one to be stationed at the National Miss. River Museum in Dubuque (3 total, Districts highest priority).		\$ 240K
4. Develop and print updated maps of the Refuge, by pool, for public distribution	\$ 50K	
5. Develop and install interpretive exhibits at offices	\$ 100K	

Goal 5: Other Recreational Use

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Annual funding needs to support signing, posting, leaflets, Leave No Trace program, law enforcement, permit administration, and other aspects of managing recreation on the Refuge (see also Goal 3, Action 6, permit spec.)		\$ 100K

Goal 6: Administration and Operations

Action	Short-term or project-specific costs (thousands)	Recurring cost per year (thousands)
1. Construct offices in support of overall Refuge administration, management, and public use (Winona, La Crosse, McGregor, Lost Mound Unit, and Headquarters)	\$ 10,000K	\$ 100K
2. Construct maintenance shops and equipment storage buildings at all Districts and Lost Mound Unit	\$ 3,500K	
3. Construct new boat landings, other accesses, and parking areas	\$ 500K	
4. Hire public information specialist to improve communication with public and media on Refuge programs and services.		\$ 100K
5. Hire part-time receptionist at Headquarters to handle public inquiries and assist with permit management		\$ 40K
6. Hire additional staff (3) for the new Lost Mound Unit (9,857 acres) to support biological, public use, and maintenance needs.		\$ 200K

4. Funding Summary

New Funding Summary by Major Category to Fully Implement the CCP	Short-term or project-specific costs	Recurring cost per year
Land Acquisition within approved boundary		\$ 1.5 million
Environmental Pool Plan habitat restoration and enhancement projects in lieu of other funding such as EMP or pending Navigation/Ecosystem initiative	\$150.0 million	
Access Trust Fund for pool drawdowns	\$ 3.0 million	
Office and maintenance building construction	\$ 13.5 million	\$.1 million
General operations and maintenance	\$ 1.695 million	\$ 1.63 million
TOTAL	\$168.195 million	\$ 3.23 million

5. Summary of Step-Down Plans Needed

Below is a list of step-down plans called for in the Draft CCP and EIS or required by Service policy. These Refuge-specific plans provide the details of implementing the respective program or initiative described in broad terms in the plan objectives and strategies, and in sections L.2 and L.3 above. These plans will be developed in consultation with other agencies, states, and partners. The public will be given ample opportunity for plan review and comment. Environmental assessments or other documentation will also be needed to comply with NEPA requirements.

- # Habitat Management Plan (new)
- # Invasive Plant Control and Management Plan
- # Wildlife Inventory and Monitoring Plan (revise)
- # Threatened, Endangered and Candidate Species (new)
- # Research Natural Area Management Plan (new)
- # Fishery and Mussel Management Plan (new)
- # Fire Management Plan (revise)
- # Forest Management Plan (new)
- # Hunting Plan (revise)
- # Fishing Plan (new)
- # Visitor Services Plan (new)
- # Trapping Plan (revise)
- # Plans or guidelines for:
 - Managed hunts
 - Commercial fish floats
 - Fishing tournaments
 - Beach management (with COE/states)
 - Guides and guiding

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Objectives and strategies implemented will be continually monitored and evaluated during the 15-year life of the plan. The wildlife inventory and monitoring plan update will be critical since fish and wildlife are important barometers of habitat condition and health. Many of the objectives in the plan deal directly with better monitoring and evaluation, and in this regard, adequate staffing and continued partnerships with the Corps of Engineers, states, U.S. Geological Survey, and others will be important. Many actions inherent in the plan are new directions and monitoring will help understand the effects of the actions on habitat, fish and wildlife populations, and public use patterns and levels. There will also be a growing need to understand the impacts of recreation on fish, wildlife, and habitat as use levels increase and means of use change.

In addition, the Mississippi River and its watershed will certainly change, and likely in ways unforeseen. Invasive species, floods, and climate may alter expected outcomes, and monitoring will be critical to detecting and reacting to such change.

7. Plan Review and Revision

As noted above, environmental change and unforeseen effects may call for changes in the plan. The Refuge will practice adaptive management, using monitoring, evaluation, and experimentation to learn and change aspects of the plan as needed. For example, a change in the size and distribution of Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas is proposed to achieve a better distribution of feeding and resting areas for fall migrants. Weekly aerial surveys in the fall will provide necessary waterfowl use data to gauge effectiveness of the changes, and along with impacts from human disturbance, form the basis for any needed boundary and regulation modifications.

Since the CCP will be a constant reference and guide for Refuge staff, review will be continuous. In addition, it is expected that the public and partners will offer continuous feedback. At least every 3 years, representatives of the Corps of Engineers, states, other agencies, and non-profit and citizen groups will be invited to meet and provide more formal input into what is working, what is not, and possible changes the Refuge should consider. Revisions will be undertaken as needed by amendments to the CCP. There will be an opportunity for public review and comment prior to making any substantive changes. A major plan review and re-write will occur after 15 years.

8. Partnerships

Refuge staff works closely with the departments of natural resources of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois in designing and carrying out projects and programs. The Corps of Engineers is a critical partner due to its dominant role in navigation, water level management, forestry, and the planning and construction of environmental restoration projects. Much of the habitat restoration and enhancement work is done through the Environmental Management Program administered by the Corps, and this work could accelerate should Congress approve and fund the Navigation and Environmental Sustainability Program (NESP).

The U. S. Geological Survey, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, and state-level counterpart agencies all play a role in biological monitoring, research, environmental regulation, and policy making on the river, and thus the Refuge. Other U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs such as fisheries and ecological services also play a key role, both as leaders for certain projects and programs, and in support. The Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program will continue to play a critical role in working with private landowners to improve the watersheds of the Refuge.

Conservation organizations are active in policy issues and/or land acquisition affecting the Refuge and include Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, Izaak Walton League, and American Rivers. A host of local conservation and sporting organizations like the La Crosse County Conservation Alliance are active. Lastly, many citizen conservationists help the Refuge as volunteers and as members of the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, a citizen support group.

The forum for bringing together such a diversity of partners, who often have different missions and agendas, is both formal and informal. Established associations, commissions, committees, and working groups bring people together; plans, planning, and public meetings allow input from everyone. Specific projects and events let citizens lend a helping hand. These partnerships will remain an important part of plan implementation, both in gaining and maintaining public and partner understanding and support, and through the joint funding of specific actions.

Staff Chart, Upper Mississippi River NW&FR



